

PASTORAL LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

The Clergy and Laity

OF THE

DIOCESE OF ST. JOHN

BY THE

Right Reverend T. CASEY, D.D.

Bishop of St. John



SAINT JOHN, N. B.

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Timothy

By the Grace of God and Favour of the Apostolic See,

Bishop of Saint John,

TO THE CLERGY, RELIGIOUS ORDERS AND LAITY OF THE
DIOCESE :

HEALTH AND BENEDICTION IN THE LORD.

DEARLY BELOVED:

We have all read with some feeling of indignation the story of that inquisitive lawyer in *Matt. XXII*, 35, who temptingly asked our Blessed Lord, what is the great commandment of the law. There is another side to the subject, however, well calculated to moderate our resentment and make us ever grateful for the happy result of the lawyer's curiosity. His question brought forth the Divine response that settles forever a matter of sovereign import: the whole law depends, and the prophets, too, on the great twin precepts of charity: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is the Eternal Law, not changing, but attaining perfection in Heaven. To fulfil it with merit unto everlasting life, we must practice all the other virtues, as faith, hope, patience, and the rest. These cease with our time of trial,—faith giving place to vision in the sight of God face to face, hope dissolving in the possession of happiness, and patience, in the supreme enjoyment of eternal rest. On the other hand, "Charity never faileth," but reaches perfection in the kingdom of God.

While charity forbids us to exclude any from our affection and our prayers, still, founded on natural law, it accords with a certain preference for those more closely related to us by

blood, affinity, and legitimate friendship. In the exercises of faith and piety, by which we work out our salvation, we are so particularly assisted and encouraged by the labours and prayers of those God has placed near us, that our affection for them can only be satisfied in the Heart of Jesus, the furnace of Divine love. When we shall have been admitted to the glory of His Vision face to face, when we shall have seen His Heart unveiled and burning with infinite love for us and for them, when "we shall have become like Him, because we shall see Him as He is," shall we cease to love our dear ones left "mourning and weeping in this valley of tears?" Say not so: for, the voice of humanity, as witnessed even by pagans, cries for recognition to the departed; non-Catholic professing Christians, too, though strongly opposed to our practice of honouring and invoking the Saints, give abundant testimonies of better Christian instincts, when, under circumstances that allay prejudice, they fully acknowledge that the Angels are looking at us with affectionate interest, and that the Saints are our loving spectators.

Tacitus, a pagan, invokes his departed friend: "Bring us back, O Agricola, from vain regrets to a lively contemplation of thy virtues;" Virgil thus speaks to a deceased baker who had endeared himself to all around: "Be favourable and propitious to those whom thou hast left behind;" so Cicero, Plato, and others, all pagans, yet, heedful of the voice of nature and without a tinge of idolatry, proclaim that we do not wholly die.

Non-Catholics, rather Puritans, too, than "High Church," when deeply moved, forgetful of prejudice, could be quoted in numbers to testify, that the Angels and the departed are lovingly interested in us. That the Angels read our unspoken thoughts, "we knew the secret flight of his retiring hours;" that they inspire "both thoughts and feelings;" that they afford us assiduous help; that the dead may share "the ministry of Angel power;" such writers as Wesley, Watts, Spenser, Southey, Dickens, and others, testify in passages of prose and poetry, singularly beautiful, but too long to be inserted here.

Far from forbidding us to hold communion with our friends in Heaven, the Bible affords abundant testimony that their love for us has not diminished, and that we are still the objects of their affectionate solicitude. They are watching us and rejoicing in our progress towards our heavenly home. Otherwise, our Lord could not tell us, as He does so emphatically in *Saint Luke XV*, 7, "I say to you that even so there shall be joy in Heaven over one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just, who need not penance."

It may be objected: it belongs to God alone to read the thoughts and movements of hearts; and therefore it is beyond the ken of creatures, be they Angels or Saints. We answer: all things belong to God, but it pleases His bounty to grant gifts to His creatures: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" said the Apostle of the Gentiles: *I Cor. IV*, 7. It belongs to God alone to read into the future, yet He gave this faculty to the Prophets; and if the Prophets saw into the future by the light of grace, how may not the Saints see the present by the light of glory, as they are looking into the face of Him who sees all things? Some Saints, as John and Paul, saw Heaven in vision on earth: nearly all the *Apocalypse* and *II Cor. XII*, 2. Why may they not see earth in Heaven? By their sanctity they see the grandest of all objects, the Infinite, God Himself face to face; and eternally contemplating Him, how can they not see the finite in Him? It was in God that the Angels and Prophets saw and knew all; and, says Leibnitz, it is in God we on earth know all that we know? The intelligence is a mirror of God and the universe; only our view here is troubled and our knowledge confused by the cloud of mortality. With the removal of the cloud, God shall manifest Himself, and, looking upon His Face, we shall continue to see objects in Him, but more clearly and extensively. This will obtain partly by the nature of spirits in glory, and partly by the special grace of God: "In thy light we shall see the light."—*Ps. XXXV*, 10.

Neither do the citizens of Heaven seem really so far off, when we note how the Bible records their actions: "And an

Angel of God called to Agar from Heaven, saying, "What art thou doing, Agar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the boy."—*Gen. XXI*, 17. Again, "an Angel of the Lord from Heaven called to him, saying, Abraham, Abraham, lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou anything to him. . . ."—*Gen. XXII*, 11, 12. Now we see the matter becoming more interesting and encouraging; for here we have the Bible witnessing two instances of Heaven's inhabitants engaged in active service for the benefit of people on earth. Cannot the Saints, who are like the Angels, assist us too? May not our friends in Heaven, who, as we have seen, are looking at us with loving sympathy, also be able to assist us by their prayers? Why not? They share "the ministry of Angel power;" and: "The Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Juda, with which Thou hast been angry? This is now the seventieth year."—*Zach. I*, 12. And *Tobias XII*, 12: "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord." It was the Archangel Raphael that said this to Tobias.

The Fathers of the Church are unanimous in the propagation and defense of this touching doctrine. Only a few can be cited, but their testimony, apart from their authority as teachers, shows the teaching of the Church in her earliest history. Origen says expressly that "all the Angels and blessed souls befriend those that serve God, and they know who are in His favour."—*Against Celsus*, p. 949. Hear Saint Gregory the Great in *Dial.*, C. 33: "Because all the Saints see God, what is it they do not know there, where they know Him who knows all things." Though we might cite many others, we claim all the Fathers, and seal our claim with the apostrophe of the great Augustine to one of our most illustrious saints and martyrs, Paul, with a reference to his participation in the death of the Proto-martyr, St. Stephen.—*Serm.* 316, *Sect.* 5. "You reign with Christ together with him whom you stoned. You both now see us, you both hear this, my discourse. I desire you both to pray for us." And St. Asterius, Bishop of

Amasea, in the age following Saint Augustine, thus imitates his illustrious predecessor, clearly showing us the doctrine and practice of the Church in those early days: "You yourselves have formerly prayed to the martyrs before you were martyrs. They heard you when you entreated them. Now that you can hear us, grant us our request."—*Serm. X.*

In fine, all this teaching, this reasoning, this consoling practice of Christians throughout the ages, is the outcome of the "Communion of Saints," in which we profess our belief daily by reciting the Apostles' Creed, and which in turn is the crowning glory of the twin precepts of charity in practice—the highest love of God and of our neighbour. As from the love of God flows our worship of Him, and the invocation of Christ Jesus—the one Mediator between God and man, I *Timothy II*, 5—so from the love of our neighbour flows the honour we give to the Saints on account of their nearness to God, and likewise their invocation. The whole doctrine and practice of our relationship with the Saints is bound up in Christ's fundamental law of love, that law which unites the whole Christian world into one great spiritual family, one vast mystical body of which Christ is the Head.—*Coll. I*, 18; *II*, 10. There are already great multitudes of Saints whom no man can number sitting with Him on thrones in His kingdom, and the Lord gives Himself to them in all His unveiled beauty and splendour, ravishing them with endless glory and felicity. It is the reward of the charity they exercised on earth. Our place in the Kingdom of Christ is different from theirs, but the Kingdom is one—they in glory, we on trial—all being members of the mystical body of which Christ is the Head.

But Christ is not exclusively in Heaven, for He repeatedly and expressly reveals His presence in His members in affliction and trial, and emphatically declares it in His sentence of reward to the elect for their exercise of charity on earth: "Come, ye blessed of My Father for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in."—*Matt. XXV*, 35. It cannot be that, once arrived and crowned in

the Kingdom of love, munificently rewarded for the observance of its law, "the just made perfect" should forthwith forget the scene of their labours and their companions, the former objects of their solicitude. Does not the whole story of Revelation tell us that, far from forgetting the members of Christ's kingdom on earth, love for them will be perfected in Heaven? Thus the awful power of death can have no other effect on the solidarity of all the members of the Kingdom than to make it firmer by perfect love in Heaven. It was the great Bossuet who said so well, "Charity draws the celestial spirits from Heaven to earth, from the Creator to the creature, as it raises mortal men from earth to Heaven, from the creature to the Creator." Saint John, too, the immortal seer of Patmos, who drew his charity from the burning Heart of Jesus the night before He died, sees the portals of Heaven flung open to his astonished view, sees what God judges most interesting for us to know unto the end of time, sees the "ancients," the Saints in Heaven, gathering up the prayers of the saints on earth, and offering them to the Lamb, "having every one of them harps and vials full of odours, which were the prayers of the saints."—*Apoc.* V, 8.

Nothing on this subject can be of greater moment to us than to have true ideas of what the Holy Ghost has revealed concerning it. The Bible gives copious texts in which we see that our friends in Heaven are constituted co-operators by intercession with Jesus Christ, our only Mediator of Redemption; that He has chosen the Saints to be the channels through which His favours should come to us; that He has given them power to protect us, that He grants everything to their intercession, seeming scarcely able to resist when they plead in our behalf. There is not recorded in history a greater miracle than the rescue of the three Hebrew youths from the furnace of burning fire, made seven times as hot as usual, into which they were cast by the idolatrous king of Babylon. So great was the heat that the men who threw the youths into the furnace were themselves burned to death. But the Hebrews were unhurt: "They walked in the midst of the flames blessing

God and praising the Lord."—*Dan. III*, 24. Never surely was God more visibly present by His power than He was with those young men in that terrific fire, and surely prayer could never have been made more aright than theirs, which was efficacious in that tremendous danger. Yet, all inspired as it was, and dictated by the Holy Ghost for the everlasting instruction of men, it is a luminous illustration of the principle upon which we found our devotion to the Saints. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been dead for centuries, yet it was through their well known favour with God that the young Hebrews asked and obtained mercy and safety: "Take not away Thy mercy from us for the sake of Abraham, Thy beloved, and Isaac, Thy servant, and Israel Thy holy one."—*Daniel III*, 35.

God had already many times allowed His anger to be appeased and His arm to be withdrawn, when it was raised against the kings of Juda, and He gave no other reason why He withheld His vengeance than this—"for the sake of David, my servant," though that holy king had been dead three centuries.—*Isaiah XXXVII*, 35. Again, in the second book of Machibees, we read that Judas saw in a vision the High Priest, Onias, praying for the people, as he was wont to do when alive, thus making clear the beautiful fact that the Saints continue actively and effectively to promote, by intercession, the good works in which they served God and sanctified themselves when on earth. This, another comforting vision, was vouchsafed the same heroic Machabeus, in which a still more explicit illustration is given of this consoling truth: Jeremiah himself appeared, interceding for his nation—and it was said to Judas: "This is the lover of his brethren, who prayeth much for the people and for the Holy City."—*II Mach. XV*, 12. Right afterwards Machabeus gained a signal victory over his enemies, thirty-five thousand of whom, with their General, Nicanor, were slain; and with the flight of the surviving invaders peace was happily established in the land of Juda.

If the Saints of the Old Testament continued to love their surviving friends so ardently, and, by their prayers, to protect them so powerfully, can we imagine that those under the Law of

Grace have less charity or less power? If God had such regard for David and the Prophets, what will He refuse the Apostles, those pillars of His Church, whom the Lord thus addressed with such tender affection the solemn night before He died: "You are they who have continued with Me in my temptations; and I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a Kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."—*Luke XXII*, 28. Here we have evidence that God gives His elect in Heaven the glory of participating in His power, as a reward for faithful service on earth. There are many passages in Holy Scripture and in authentic "Lives of the Saints" to show that, even on earth, their faith and their prayers could move mountains, conquer kingdoms and raise the dead.—*I Cor. XIII*, 2; *Hebrews XI*, 33, *et seq.* When they are now sitting at the table of the King of kings, "judging," are they to be considered less mighty, and not rather more so, than when they could only plead here below?

Will it still be asked, can the Saints hear us when we pray to them? Note Sir Thomas More's answer to initial doubts on this beautiful doctrine. Though not a doctor of the Church, he is recognized by all scholars of English history as a man of rare intelligence, splendid attainments, and profound piety, one of the early martyrs of the sixteenth century, and may certainly be accepted as a witness to the faith of the Church in his day. "Ye marvel and think it hard to believe that Saints hear us. And, while we see that we obtain the things we pray for, I marvel much more how men can doubt whether their prayers be heard or not. When saints were in this world at liberty and might walk the world about, think you that in Heaven they stand tied to a post?"

How can they *not* hear us? Are they not living? Yea, and more truly alive than when tabernacled in the flesh: "I live," says our Lord, "and you shall live."—*John XIV*, 19. And, "Be faithful to me unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.—*Apoc. II*, 10. To the eye of faith, the Saints really live in individual, personal existence with their faculties

immensely brightened and strengthened. How can they *not* hear us better than we hear one another? "They are too far away, our voices cannot reach them?" How talk of distance for spirits made perfect and living in God who is everywhere? They are separated from us in state rather than in place. Time and space are only relations that concern us in our state of mortality: the Saints in eternal glory are not subject to them. They are living with God, and, united to Him, they may be as near as we will to every one of us.

We wonder how they can see and hear in divers places at once. We have just seen that the Saints are not subject to the laws of space; but Blessed More's answer to this difficulty, given four centuries ago, is so clear and applicable that it is worth inserting here: "Now, when we may with our fleshly eye and ear in this gross body see and hear things far distant from us, and from sundry places far distant asunder, marvel we so much that blessed angels and holy souls, being pure spiritual substances, uncharged by all burthensome flesh and bones, may in doing the same as far pass and exceed us and our powers natural, as the lively soul exceedeth our deadly body. Or, cannot we believe that they hear us, though we find that they help us, unless we perceive by what means they do it—as whether they see and hear us, by coming hither to us, or our voice coming hence to them, or whether God see all and show it them, or whether they behold it in Him, as one doth in a book the thing he readeth, or whether God by some other way doth utter it unto them as one doth in speaking? Except we know the means, we will not else believe the matter? As wise were he that would not believe he can see, because he cannot perceive by what means he can see." And indeed we cannot understand how we can hear each other, more than how the Saints hear us.

Will it still be said that God can and will as gladly hear and help us as any Saint, and then why not go to Him direct? We answer that such is not God's plan in the universe, either in the order of nature, or in the order of grace. We see Him universally acting through agents or created causes. God

could create us individually by His direct action; instead, He introduces us into society by birth from parents, rears us by their nursing, and afterwards provides for us by the co-operation of the society in which we live. Light, air, moisture, are necessary and are supplied by nature, a creature of God, a second agency. All creation is a system of mediation and intercommunion. So also, in the supernatural order, is it abundantly clear from all that has been said from Holy Scripture, from sacred writers, and from right reason, that it hath pleased God we should seek the intervention of His Saints, and pray for help to them. Was it idolatry that the widow asked Eliseus to raise her dead son to life? Was God angry that he did so? If He so rewarded that poor woman for prayer to His servant on earth, shall we displease Him by honouring His Saints as much in Heaven?

Devotion to the Saints is, therefore, a happy medium of increasing our devotion to God through His Incarnate Son, and a gratification to the longing of humanity for communion with those "who have gone before us with the sign of faith," and whom we never cease to love. It brings us into intelligent and affectionate touch with the choice members of the Christian family throughout the ages, and through them into closer relations with Christ, our Head. It is in keeping with our nature that all influences gain strength in proportion as they are brought home to us; and thus, by cultivating devotion to the Saints whose names we bear, or whom we have chosen by some spiritual attraction as patrons, or under whose patronage our parish church is dedicated, we find ever increasing a powerful awakening to spiritual life.

By universal Christian instinct, this holds good with nations as well as with individuals. To speak only of our forbears, what Catholic son of Erin has not cherished veneration for Saint Patrick? Can the children of Catholic France ever forget her royal Saint, Louis IX? And we have in like manner St. Edward in England, St. Margaret in Scotland, and St. David in Wales. These for individuals as well as for nations seem nearer to us by patronage and locality, seem to belong to us rather than to the world.

and they form a closer connecting link with our Lord, the Head of all the Church. We need not go out of our own city to see this grand Christian principle recognized and perpetuated. "Saint John" is named by choice of the great Catholic explorer, Champlain, after the austere Saint whose eulogy the Divine Master Himself pronounced—"There hath not been born of woman a greater prophet than John the Baptist."—*Luke VII, 28.*

We urge, then, with all possible zeal, pastors and people to promote the honour of the Saints, their pious invocation, and, above all, their assiduous imitation. In our days and in our regions, if we except the Feasts of our Lord, His Blessed Mother and a few distinguished Saints, as the Apostles, we must hold to this beautiful devotion by the patronal Saints of our churches, and our own name Saints. No lapse of time can sever or weaken the bonds of charity that unite them to us. Their prayers for us who invoke them, can no more cease than they can cease to love God, or to love us in God. In the history of the diocese we have countless blessings recorded for which we should glorify God in His Saints. With increased devotion and with more frequent invocation, we may be assured of ever new evidences of their love for us and of their power with God.

For the greater assurance of these happy results, we ordain that the patronal Feast of every church in the diocese having a resident priest, whether it has been fully consecrated or dedicated, or only blessed, be celebrated as a double of the first class with an octave, though not with the obligation of hearing Mass for the faithful. Let there be preparation for the Feast, instruction on the life and merits of the Saint, exhortation to the Sacraments during the octave, and to all that they should in like manner honour their name Saint. It should be made clear that no one in mortal sin can make any proper commemoration of the Saints, and that the only honour one in that state can offer them is to implore their intercession with God to obtain for him a true repentance. The best possible tribute to a Saint is to receive Holy Communion in his honour.

By a recent Indult from the Holy See, two High Masses of Requiem a week may be sung, though not on a double of the first or second class. All former privileges on this matter are hereby cancelled.

The Regulations of Lent will be the same as last year. Prayer and self-denial should generously be practiced during the Holy Season,—especially short, frequent prayers invoking the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Virgin, and our patron Saints, and abstinence from unnecessary amusements and intoxicating liquors.

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Brethren.

This Letter shall be read in every church of the diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the pastor shall officiate therein.



† TIMOTHY CASEY,
Bishop of Saint John.

ARTHUR W. MEAHAN,
Secretary.

Given at Saint John, Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11, 1912.

